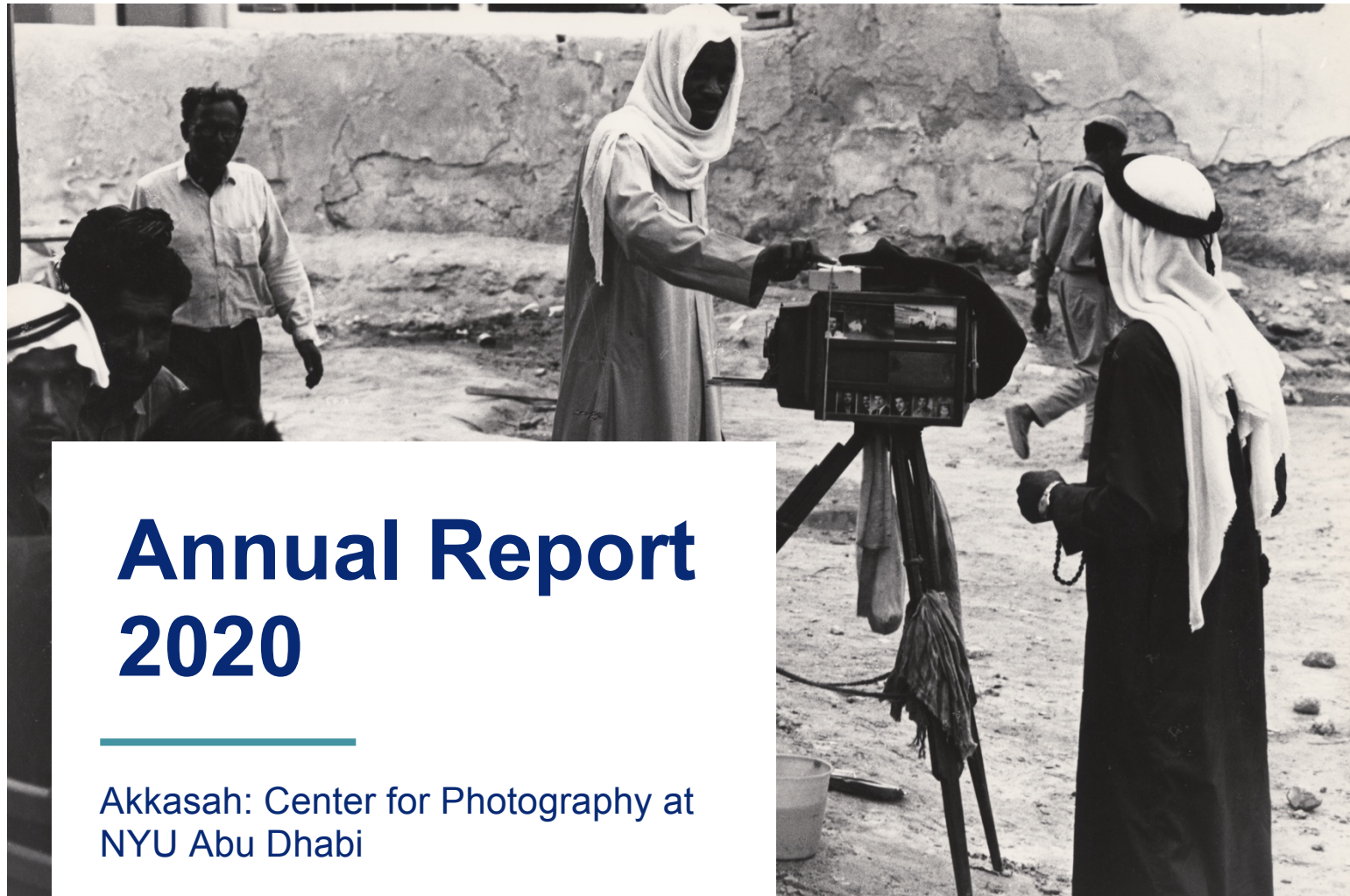




Annual Report 2020

Akkasah: Center for Photography at
NYU Abu Dhabi

 **akkasah** عكاسة
■ CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY
■ NEW YORK UNIVERSITY ABU DHABI

www.akkasah.org

MARCH 2021

Authored by: Jasmine Soliman with additions by
Jonathan Burr



Year in Review

From March 2020 the Akkasah team, like many, began working remotely. Despite this being a huge setback for many in the Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM) sector, the team were able to do so with great success, largely due to the substantial number of photographic prints and albums that had been digitized during 2019. The team maintained regular meetings throughout online and utilized project management tools to ensure

The team were reduced to three after Project Manager, Ozge Calafato, left in February 2020. The archival collections work output detailed in this report is the work of Jonathan Burr and Jasmine Soliman, with invaluable contributions by Student Assistants, Emily Broad, Yagmur Unal, and Amna al Qubaisi.

A key Center goal was reached this year on the publication of the [Arabic website](#) on the 19th of October. The website was received with high praise from institutions in the region, including Louvre Abu Dhabi, the American University in Cairo (AUC) and the American Center for Oriental Research in Jordan (ACOR).

The news that the funding proposal put forward by Salwa Mikdadi, Shamooun Zamir and May Dabbagh for al Mawred/ the [Arab Center for the Study of Art](#) was successful came in October. Akkasah will continue its work as a component of the wider center, which will undertake research and archival collections development in the visual art and photography of Western Asia and North Africa.



Shamooun Zamir



Jonathan Burr



Jasmine Soliman

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Collections Processing Overview

The Akkasah Collections include photographic prints, negatives, slides and albums as well as born-digital material. The historical collections span the 1860s to the 1990s and are composed of **32,766** prints/pages.

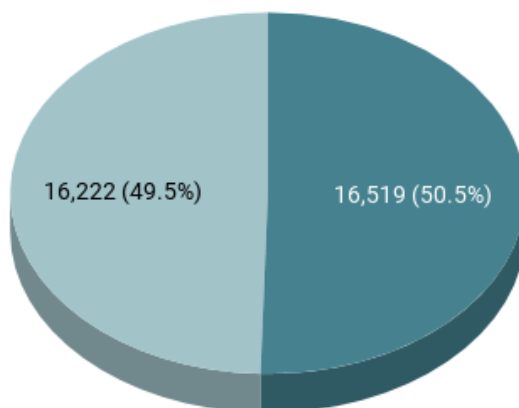
As of December 2020, **11,915** images from Akkasah's collections have been published online. A further **4,723** prints/album pages (representing **50%** of historical collections) have been digitized, with **3,566** of those in the first stages of cataloguing in spreadsheets.

The data below has been extracted from the [Akkasah Master Processing](#) spreadsheet which contains a full breakdown of each collection's/album's processing status.

"50% of all collections have been digitized"

Digitized	Cropped	File structure	Described in spreadsheet	QC in spreadsheet	Catalogued in ArchivesSpace
16,519	16,341	13,089	16,138	12,733	13,475
Total prints/pages	Remaining to Catalogue	Remaining to Digitize	Digitized	Catalogued in Spreadsheets	Fully Processed
32,745	19,270	16,226	50%	49%	40%

● Digitized ● Undergoing processing



Digitizing and Digital Processing

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team did not have access to the office and therefore the Phase One camera, however, as a very significant portion of the collections, 5,597 prints/pages, had already been digitized and required post-processing, cataloguing and entry into ArchivesSpace, the team were able to work remotely with great success.

Number of images/pages	Date Digitized	Collection/Album	Format
87	March 2020	Zahide Seniz album vol I - Ozge Calafato Collection	Album

To-Date Akkasah has published the most [digitized archival objects](#) amongst all NYU Libraries and Archival Collections.

Akkasah Center for Photography at NYU Abu Dhabi	11,954
Tamiment Library & Wagner Labor Archives	9,948
The Fales Library & Special Collections	9,603
New York University Archives	2,030
Poly Archives	1,668
NYU Abu Dhabi Archives and Special Collections	313
New-York Historical Society	235
Research Institute for the Study of Man	207
Center for Brooklyn History	134

Cataloguing and Description

A critical step in the archival work that Akkasah does is the cataloguing of images on an online database called ArchivesSpace (AS). AS allows us to record all critical identifying information and metadata for each image (e.g. description, date, measurements, subject tags), allowing for access both through physical retrieval and through our website at Akkasah.org. AS is a system that is maximized for users cataloguing at a collection and series-level as opposed to item-level as Akkasah does. We have adapted our methods to account for this however, and the success of these adaptations are reflected in the metrics listed in this report.

The cataloguing of images requires the team to make a number of assessments prior to the entry of the information in the AS. Each of these assessments will vary in complexity, and therefore time commitment, depending on the nature of images themselves. A collection of 100 images of a single subject, for instance, would not require as much time to catalogue as a series of photographs each with different notable people in multiple locations. Translation of writing, identification of studio stamps, and a number of other factors can lead to 100 images being catalogued in the span of an hour or possibly days.

Akkasah hires Student Assistants to generate catalogue entries and to undertake editing tasks. Each Student Assistant based on their individual background and skills will have their own pace and accuracy of work. Due to the online interface of AS and the time it takes to move from item to item in the system (a lag time that is commonly a few seconds), we have developed a workflow that begins with the data required in AS to be entered into an Excel or Google Sheets spreadsheet. The review of the information by one of the senior team members is exponentially faster on such a sheet, a time savings that is significant even factoring the additional time it will take to transfer the vetted information from the sheet into AS.

Accession and Resource Records

The accession and resource records created in Akkasah's early years were incomplete and not aligned to NYU Archival Collections Management (ACM) guidelines. A great deal of work has been undertaken to move towards the completion of these records (and therefore all finding aids), progress of which can be viewed on the [Accession I Resource Checklists](#) spreadsheet.

All 37 of Akkasah's Finding Aids can be viewed on [NYU BobCat Archival Collections](#).

Item-level Description in Spreadsheets

1,814 prints/pages were catalogued in spreadsheets by Student Assistants. Each of these entries undergoes a review and editing process by Akkasah's staff before being approved for the next stage of cataloguing in AS.

Number of images/pages	Collection/Album	Format
651	Hisham Khatib Collection	Prints and Albums
499	Syria Collection	Prints
87	Zahide Seniz album vol I - Ozge Calafato Collection	Album
32	Africa-Algeria (Algeria Travelogue, 1880)	Album
56	Orientreise (Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey)	Album
78	Photographs of Iran, Iraq, Caucasus and Turkey. 1891 HOTZ, APH.	Album
59	TAYLOR, H. E. Irving. 'A trip in Algeria'. [Algeria], December 1901 – April 1902	Album
46	'Travel in the Middle East' (Lebanon, Syria and Jordan)	Album
49	Tunisia travel on the Kairouan, c. 1951	Album
55	Iraq and Kurdistan – compiled by L. Wells of RAF Hinaidi	Album
52	Iraq and Kurdistan – compiled by an RAF Serviceman	Album
28	Aviation in Mesopotamia Campaign WWI	Album
76	Baba Gurgur – Oil Drilling in Iraq	Album
49	Demonstrations During the Abadan Crisis, 1951	Album
Total 1,814		

Cataloguing in ArchivesSpace

After review by the Akkasah team, **1,079** item-level entries (composed of 499 prints and 580 pages within photo albums) were added to ArchivesSpace with measurements, dates, agents (photographers or studios), geographical locations and topical subject tags.

Number of images/pages	Collection/Album	Format
499	Syria Collection	Prints
32	Africa-Algeria (Algeria Travelogue, 1880)	Album
56	Orientreise (Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey)	Album
78	Photographs of Iran, Iraq, Caucasus and Turkey. 1891 HOTZ, Albertus Paulus Hermanus	Album
59	TAYLOR, H. E. Irving. 'A trip in Algeria'. [Algeria], December 1901 – April 1902	Album
46	'Travel in the Middle East" (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan)	Album
49	Tunisia travel on the Kairouan, c. 1951	Album
55	Iraq and Kurdistan – compiled by L. Wells of RAF Hinaidi	Album
52	Iraq and Kurdistan – compiled by an RAF Serviceman	Album
28	Aviation in Mesopotamia Campaign WWI	Album
76	Baba Gurgur – Oil Drilling in Iraq	Album
49	Demonstrations During the Abadan Crisis, 1951	Album

Total 1,079

Editing and Revisions

Akkasah's subject tag vocabulary and descriptive policies undergo frequent review and revision, these tasks do not reflect in processing calculations but are an integral part of our work. In 2020, **95** subject tag correction and editing tasks were completed, representing over **30,000** reviewed item-level catalogue entries. The ongoing tasks and edits can be viewed on the [Subject Tag Tasks and Data](#) spreadsheet.

Submissions to NYU Digital Library Technology Services (DLTS)

Digital surrogates of the following 9 photo albums were submitted to DLTS for digital preservation and image hosting.

Number of images/pages	Collection/Album	Format
59	TAYLOR, H. E. Irving. 'A trip in Algeria'. [Algeria], December 1901 – April 1902	Album
46	'Travel in the Middle east' (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan)	Album
49	Tunisia travel on the Kairouan, c. 1951	Album
55	Iraq and Kurdistan – compiled by L. Wells of RAF Hinaidi	Album
53	Impressions of Iraq - compiled by L. Wells of RAF Hinaidi	
52	Iraq and Kurdistan – compiled by an RAF Serviceman	Album
28	Aviation in Mesopotamia Campaign WWI	Album
76	Baba Gurgur – Oil Drilling in Iraq	Album
46	Demonstrations During the Abadan Crisis, 1951	Album

Total pages
464

Total
images/prints
731

Publishing

There are 11,915 images published online at Akkasah.org. **1,683** images were published in 2020 after being submitted to NYU Digital Library Technology Services (DLTS) and undergoing digital archiving and hosting.

Photo Albums	No. of Pages	Date Published
Royal Air Force in Iraq and Sharjah during WWI v.1	52	5 February 2020
Royal Air Force in Iraq and Sharjah during WWI v.2	72	5 February 2020
Scenes of Egypt during WWI	72	5 February 2020
Aden-Egypte	132	5 February 2020
Royal Flying Corps – Egypt in the 1910s	120	5 February 2020
Prints	No. of Prints	Date Published
Syria Collection	781	5 February 2020
Nasri Fuleihan Collection	393	30 March 2020
Born Digital	No. of Files	Date Published
Markazi	61	January 2020

Total 1,683

Acquisitions

All Akkasah collections are listed and described at [Akkasah.org/collections](https://akkasah.org/collections). Finding aids are available through [NYU Libraries Archival Collections](https://www.library.nyu.edu/archival) website.

The following albums were acquired from Voyager Press in March 2020:

- [Persian Corridor – Persia and Iraq Command \(PAIFORCE\), 1941-42](#)
- [Anglo-Iranian Oil Company \(AIOC\), Aden 1954](#)

All potential collections and collaborations are [recorded here](#).

Uses of Collections

An [Image Request Form](#) is available on Akkasah's website, through which permissions to reproduce and publish Akkasah's images can be requested.

We received **20** image use requests during 2020, these were mainly from academics and members of the press, and included individuals from notable institutions such as:

Institutional Affiliation	Use
The American University in Cairo Press	Publication - Maadi: The Making and Unmaking of a Cairo Suburb, 1878-1962
National Gallery of Art, Washington	Exhibition
University of Greenwich	Online Exhibition - Progeny of the Ottoman Empire
Princeton University	Publication - Malleable Monuments: The Material Politic of Ottoman Architecture in the Fifteenth Century
Salama bint Hamdan al Nahyan Foundation (Barker Langham)	Exhibition - UAE Pavilion, Dubai EXPO 2020
Princeton	Publication - An Intellectual History of 19 th Century Print
Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA) – Le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)	Publication - Collecting Cairo and Damascus After 1850
Tokyo University of the Arts	Publication – Beyond Alserkal

Communications and Outreach

Akkasah aims to be an approachable, accessible and engaging archive. Due to an already developed social media presence, increased website functionality and addition of an Arabic website, all activities were able to continue during 2020...

Conferences, Workshops and Classes

A full breakdown of all conferences, classes and workshops participated in can be [viewed here](#).

Institution	Class or Event	Speakers	Moderator/ Class Leader
NYUAD	Mining the Archive in the UAE	Jasmine Soliman, Ozge Calafato	Pamela Newkirk
NYUAD	The Photo Album (three classes)	Jasmine Soliman, Jonathan Burr	Michele Bambling
Gulf Photo Plus and Apple	The New Gulf – Photo Archives	Jasmine Soliman	Mohamed Somji
MESA	Images and Archives: Digital Collections in the Time of Corona	Shamoon Zamir	Katie J. Hickerson

Social Media

Akkasah social media accounts are run by Jasmine Soliman. Key goals are to:

- Connect and engage with communities and projects
- Increase accessibility and visibility
- Introduce individuals and institutions to Akkasah's website

These are attained by highlighting the people, places and subjects within collections, and engaging with institutions, projects and researchers.

Social Media Analytics

The Akkasah social media accounts have a combined total of 2,967 followers (without the use of sponsored posts), and saw an increase of 620 followers in the last 3 months of 2020.

- [Twitter](#) - 1,062 followers
- [Instagram](#) - 1,127 followers
- [Facebook](#) - 778 followers

Interactions and Engagement

Akkasah: Photography Archive, NYUAD @Akka... · Dec 17, 2020 ...
Subject: SEWING (see also, embroidery 🧵)
akkasah.org/en/results/?fi...



You

2



7



Dr Hannah-Louise Clark
@MedicalMaghrib

Replying to @Akkasah_NYUAD

I use this photograph (of the woman at a sewing machine) in my teaching. Thanks for being accessible and a trove of amazing images @Akkasah_NYUAD, my lectures would be much less exciting without you

4:31 AM · Dec 18, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone



أحلام 夢
@AstroAhlam

So happy to see my father's photography hobby from the 60's come to life with @Akkasah_NYUAD, and having his photographs featured for the UAE National Day 🇦🇪❤️ Check out the historical photograph collection on their website! 📸

Akkasah: Photography Archive, NYUAD @Akkasah_NY... · Dec 2, 2020
Happy #UAENationalDay49 visit akkasah.org to see 380 historical and contemporary photographs of the UAE, including the collections of Zaki Nusseibeh @Zakinus and the Al Qassim Family.
#اليوم الوطني 49
#الثاني من ديسمبر

4:32 PM · Dec 2, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone



MaDiH (مديح): Mapping Digital Heritage in Jordan
@madih_info

The @Akkasah_NYUAD offers a rich #archive of historical #photographs from the Middle East and North Africa. Explore a unique collection from #Jordan and #Palestine through the #MaDiH repository tinyurl.com/y23k8cbg



12:46 PM · Nov 2, 2020 · Twitter Web App



Zaki Nusseibeh ✓
@Zakinus

23 photos from the Arab world that were almost lost forever thenational.ae/arts-culture/a... via @TheNationalUAE



23 photos from the Arab world that were almost lost forever
NYU Abu Dhabi's Akkasah is using its 33,000 archived photographs to help preserve the Arab world's cultural memory – and it has digitised more than...
thenationalnews.com

8:09 AM · Mar 20, 2020 · Twitter Web Client

Akkasah.org Website

In October 2020, a key Center goal was realized in development and launch of the Arabic website. The endeavor was the result of months of work in collaboration with the development team, Andy Zheng and Amy Hu, at NYU Shanghai and external language and website consultants:

- Elham Eidrous – translation
- Ban Kattan – proofreading
- N.A. Mansour – correction of archival/academic terminology, advising on user experience and adding Arabic content to WordPress

The site was received with high praise from institutions in the region, including Louvre Abu Dhabi, the American University in Cairo (AUC) and the American Center for Oriental Research in Jordan (ACOR).

Changes, updates and requests

158 changes and fixes and **125** content updates were deployed during 2020, these included improvements to the visual clarity and user experience/interface such as:

- ‘Subject tags by category’ open access bilingual spreadsheet added to home page
- Processing statements added beneath each collection/album description e.g. This collection has been digitized and is undergoing processing
- Statement of physical custody added beneath each collection/album description
- Collection processing summaries added to all partially digitized/catalogued collections
- Highlighted values in advanced search upon selection
- Simple ‘x’ line deletion option added to advanced search
- Link to all finding aids added to collections page
- Increased font sizes and padding
- Text wrapping in pop-up search modules
- Reduced requirement for page scrolling
- Automatic date field population on image request and contact forms
- Names of NYU teams, Student assistant and consultants added to about page

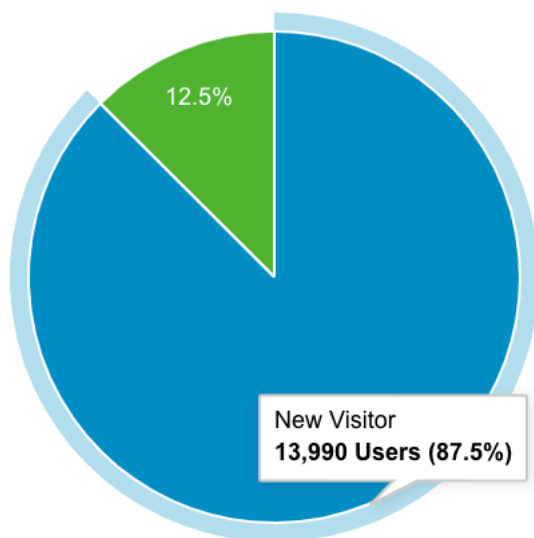
Website Analytics

A significant increase in website traffic was observed during 2020, the figures below represent an increase on 2019's analytics:

- **14,086** users – an 160% increase
- **21,199** sessions – a 119% increase
- **685,312** pageviews - a 115% increase
- **13,950** new users – a 161% increase

■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor

Jan 1, 2020 - Dec 31, 2020



Screenshot of Google Analytics New VS Returning website visitors in 2020.

Add additional analytics screenshot

Taking into account the wide use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) that distort geographical data, akkasah.org was accessed most frequently from IP addresses in the following countries:

1.	 United States	4,166 (29.44%)
2.	 Egypt	3,944 (27.87%)
3.	 United Arab Emirates	1,011 (7.14%)
4.	 United Kingdom	464 (3.28%)
5.	 Turkey	397 (2.81%)
6.	 Saudi Arabia	374 (2.64%)
7.	 Hong Kong	363 (2.57%)
8.	 Germany	357 (2.52%)
9.	 Canada	273 (1.93%)
10.	 Italy	227 (1.60%)

Screenshot of Google Analytics geographical breakdown of website users in 2020.

Press Coverage

Highlights of press coverage, for all coverage see [press coverage reports](#).

Press Releases

- [Akkasah's New Nasri Fuleihan Digital Collection Features Images of Palestine Between 1910-1924](#)
- [Arabic website launch press release](#)
[مركز عكاسة للتصوير الفوتوغرافي في جامعة نيويورك أبوظبي يطلق منصته الجديدة باللغة العربية](#)
- [New Research centers Focused on Water Research, Human Behavior, Art and Art History](#)

Coverage

- [CNN Arabic – Photographs presenting aspects of the lives of Palestinians 100 years ago](#)
- [Cairo West – Revisiting Egypt's Glorious Legacy of Film – in Color](#)
- [Middle East Eye – Art and Coronavirus: Middle eastern Galleries to View on Lockdown](#)
- [Enterprise – The new Akkasah photography collection showing the behind the scenes of Egyptian cinema](#)
- [The National – 13 insightful photos of early 1900s Palestine taken by engineer Nasri Fuleihan](#)
- [The National – 23 photos from the Arab world that were almost lost forever](#)
- [Hazine – Researching Modern Egypt Online](#)

Geographic Distribution of Collections

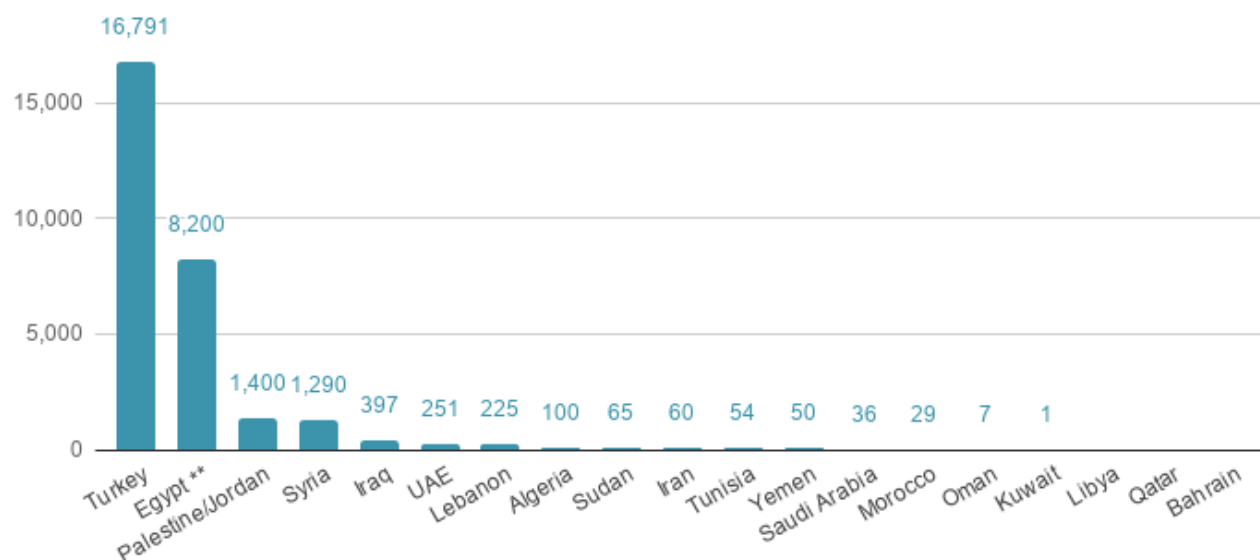
Historical Collections and Albums

Country	Approx. Total in Collections*	Total Online*	Remaining to Publish
Turkey	16,791	4,979	11,812
Egypt**	8,200	3,119	5,081
Palestine/Jordan	1,400	740	660
Syria	1,290	790	500
Iraq	397	150	247
UAE	251	251	
Lebanon	225	46	179
Algeria	100	35	65
Sudan	65	65	
Iran	60	10	50
Tunisia	54	20	34
Yemen	50	38	12
Saudi Arabia	36	36	
Morocco	29	7	22
Oman	7	7	
Kuwait	1	1	
Libya			
Qatar			
Bahrain			

*Approximate as some combined travel albums or yet to be fully processed collections, as well as images that were taken in unknown locations

** Egypt number excludes 3,200 Samir Farid Collection negatives

Geographical Representation in Historical Collections



**Egypt number does not include Samir Farid Collection

Contemporary Collections

Country	Total in Collections
Djibouti	124
UAE	114
Saudi Arabia	17
Kuwait	15
Qatar	9
Bahrain	9
Total	228

Format Breakdown of Collections

Photo Albums	No.
Total pages in albums	3,939
Total number of albums	74
Albums housed at NYUAD	51
Digital surrogate albums	23
Prints	No.
Total prints	24,112
Prints housed at NYUAD	20,079
Digital surrogate prints	3,604
Negatives/Slides	No.
Total negatives/slides	4,715
Total negatives/slides housed at NYUAD	4,697

Total 32,766

Post-Custodial ‘Loan, Digitize, Publish, Return’ Collections

Akkasah combines custodial and post-custodial models, as such **5,458** prints/pages out of a total of 32,745 (representing **16.6%** of all collections) are the result of successful collaborations in which photographic prints or albums were loaned, rehoused, digitized and then returned to the collection owners, with the digital surrogates then being catalogued and published online. Collection owners retain copyright and image reproduction rights.

Collection	Country Focus	No. of objects in collection
Zaki Nusseibeh Collection	UAE	145 prints
Al Qassim Family Collection	UAE	161 prints
Collège de la Sainte Famille Collection	Egypt	1,402 prints
Hisham Khatib Collection	Palestine, Jordan and Egypt	1,586 prints and 23 albums
Nasri Fuleihan Collection	Palestine, Jordan and USA	393 prints
		Total 5,458

Documents and Websites Referred to:

Internal Documents and Spreadsheets

Collections Management and Processing:

- [Master Processing Spreadsheet](#)
- [Accession I Resource Tracking Spreadsheet](#)
- [Subject Tag Editing and Review Tasks](#)
- [Subject Tag Vocabulary Review](#)
- [Potential Collections and Collaborations](#)
- [Collection Processing Summaries](#)
- [Geographical Representation Across Collections](#)

Website Management:

- [Website Requests Log](#)
- [Website Content Updates](#)
- [Arabic Website Translation and Completion Status](#)
- [Analytics](#)

Reporting and Communications:

- [Class Presentations, Conferences and Workshops](#)

Public Documents and Websites

Reporting and Communications:

- [Nasri Fuleihan Collection Press Release](#)
- [Arabic Website Launch Press Release](#)
- [Annual Report: January-December 2019](#)
- [Annual Report: April 2019-March 2020](#)

NYU Libraries

[NYU Libraries Archival Collections – Digital Content](#)

[NYU Libraries Archival Collections – Akkasah Collections](#)

This report was authored by Jasmine Soliman, questions are welcome and can be emailed to akkasah@nyu.edu .